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JACOB.

A SEATONIAN POEM.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS E. HANKINSON, M.A.

OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.



CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED AT THE PITT PRESS, BY AND FOR JOHN SMITH,
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY.

JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND, LONDON;
DEIGHTONS; AND STEVENSON, CAMBRIDGE,
AND THE BOOKSELLERS AT LYNN.

M.DCCC.XXXIV.

Price One Shilling.

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[*Entered at Stationers' Hall.*]

ADVERTISEMENT.

“THE REV. THOMAS SEATON, M.A. late Fellow of Clare Hall, bequeathed to the University (in 1738) the rents of his Kislingbury estate, now producing clear £40 per annum, to be given yearly to that Master of Arts who shall write the best English Poem on a sacred subject. The Vice-Chancellor, the Master of Clare Hall, and the Greek Professor (who are the disposers of this premium) determine the subject, which is delivered out in January, and the Poem is to be sent to the Vice-Chancellor on or before the 29th of September following. The Poem is to be printed, and the expense deducted out of the product of the estate: the remainder is given as a reward to the composer.”

CAMBRIDGE, *October 25, 1834.*

*The above premium was this year awarded to the Rev. THOMAS
E. HANKINSON, M.A. of Corpus Christi College.*

JOSHUA KING, *Vice-Chancellor.*

WILLIAM WEBB, *Master of Clare Hall.*

JAMES SCHOLEFIELD, *Greek Professor.*



J A C O B.

“Jacob was a plain man.”

GEN. XXV. 27.

“I boast no song in magic wonder's rife:

But yet, oh Nature! is there nought to prize
Familiar in thy bosom-scenes of life?”

CAMPBELL.

A DAY of many changes!—shower and sun,
In dubious conflict, oft have lost and won;—
Now a long space of deep and settled gloom,
Now bursts the day-king from his shadowy tomb,
And the broad river and the cultured plain
Laugh in the luxury of light again.

A day of many changes!—but at length
The spirits of the clouds have spent their strength,
Driven from the empire of the upper world,
Their ranks are broken, and their banner furled;
And scarce the ear, in faint vibration, feels
The distant roll of their retiring wheels.

'Tis evening's solemn hour!—the expectant West
Awaits the advent of her glorious guest ;
And fairy looms have broidered with vermilion
The gorgeous drapery of his proud pavilion ;
He walks to rest triumphant,—from his hair
Shedding down radiance through the amber air ;
As if resolved in lavish mood to pay
To nature quittance for his long delay.
Brief reign as beautiful!—how quickly die
The splendors of that airy pageantry !
E'en as we gaze, the brilliant tints of Even
Are melted in the blank abyss of Heaven ;
And though, in close battalia ranked on high,
The countless armies of the night march by,
Their sheen, so coldly, tremulously bright,
Seems but the Ghost of Day's departed light.

All day an aged man with wistful eye
Had watched the aspect of that moody sky ;
As if each change on memory's mirror cast
Some imaged scene of joy or sorrow past :
Dim was his sight,—but not too dim to know
When the broad sunshine settled on his brow ;
He smiled, as though some inward sense had felt
The warmth and gladness in his spirit melt,—
An inward consciousness of peace divine,
Gilding the shadows of his day's decline :

Yea even the very clouds, that long had striven
To dim the lustre of that ray from heaven,
Were taught to bear the ensigns of its power,
And swell the triumph of its parting hour.

And some who watch'd him deemed at times there stole
A brilliant emanation of the soul,
Shedding a pure effulgence, all its own,—
A charm to Nature's kindest smile unknown;
As if his aged brow and tresses white
Emitted, rather than received, the light:
But, when the Sun, fast sinking to his rest,
Dipped his great disk behind the desert's breast,
A moment, dazzled by the level ray,
Those guardian friends had turned their glance away;
And, when they gazed again, they scarcely knew
That face, so altered in its form and hue;
Where not one trace of feeling lingered yet,—
The glory was eclipsed!—The soul was set!
Set to a world o'ercast with sin and sorrow,
To rise unclouded on a fairer morrow.

¹ The last of the three Patriarchs!—none might claim,
When he was not, that venerable name:

¹ In Joseph's dream (Gen. xxxvii. 9) the patriarch Jacob is represented by the sun, and his children by the stars.

And though his numerous sons, a stalwart band,
Spread forth their tribes along the peopled land,
None rose to emulate the parent-mind;—
It left no fellow to its worth behind.

There is a mystery in parting words—
A spell that sways affection's deepest chords,
And oft, when least expected, makes us start
At that Eolian music of the heart.

They were the offspring of his favorite child,
Who oft had Age of half its cares beguiled;
And, by their Grandsire's couch, his latest day,
Watched life's last sands in brightness ebb away;
They caught his parting words!—and, many a year,
Those tones will haunt remembering fancy's ear,—
Checking youth's glee, like that long, plaintive wail,
Which mingles with the night-bird's rapturous tale,
And soothing manhood's breast of stormy gloom
With a far music from beyond the tomb.

“My children!”—thus he spake,—“Could aught detain
My spirit, half enfranchised of its chain,
Methinks, 'twould be the lingering love, whose sway
Yields not to time, and triumphs o'er decay;

The love, that yearns, oh yet a little while,
To sun me in the brightness of your smile,
A little while, to bid my heart rejoice
At the wild notes of childhood's happy voice;
And nurse Hope's golden dreams, from hour to hour
Tending the promise of life's opening flower.

“Yet wherefore wish?—Ah why should I retrace,
With those I love, that wild and weary space?
Why should I wait to see the clouds arise,
And blot the hopes of morning's rosy skies;
To see the cheek, where Mirth's young dimples play,
Sink in the settled languor of decay;
And the glad eye, as yet unknown to tears,
Lose all its brightness 'neath the blight of years?
I was like thee, my Ephraim,—This worn face,
Where Time hath left so many a ruthless trace,
Thou scarce would'st deem, perchance, that it had known
As smooth and fair a beauty as thine own.
I had a brother too,—mine eyes are dim,
But oft, Manasseh, in thy strength of limb
Well framed in Nature's sterner mould, to grace
Each hardy venture of the fight or chace,
Thy gallant bearing, and thy gladsome smile,
Thy heart that knows not, and that fears not guile,
Whose fond devotion, on the present cast,
Neglects the future, and forgets the past,

E'en in thy voice, its accent and its phrase,
I mark the comrade of my early days.—
And the same fate is on thee—the decree,
That gave the birthright heritage to me,
Constrained my tongue, and swayed my hands to shed
The first-born's blessing on his brother's head.

“Alas! my brother—as I lay alone
On the hard pillow of the desert stone,
Forced from my home, my happy home, to flee,
How turned my soul in bitterest thought to thee!
Together born! together rocked to rest!
And fed and pillowed by the same dear breast!
Together! How that word, in after years,
Unseals the heart-spring's unavailing tears;
I shed them then—how oft I since have shed
For friends—the absent—the estranged—the dead—
The partners of youth's joys, or childhood's mirth,
All gone! and I am left alone on Earth.

“My brother!—yes I wronged thee, and I date
From that sad hour, the darkening of my fate;
For all was bright till then,—and thence begin
The shades of sorrow and the stains of sin.
How much I suffered for thy sake is known
To Him who knows the heart,—to Him alone:

But He is gracious;—on that dreary night
 I saw His glory, and I blest the sight;
 My spirit saw Him!—²saw the steps that rise
 Up from this earth to yonder glowing skies,

² “And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” Gen. xxviii. 12. The poetical liberty taken with the literality of this passage was suggested by the view of the Alps at sunrise from the Righi on the borders of the lake of Lucerne. The idea, transplanted into the poem, was originally embodied in the following lines written on the spot.

Oh God! upon the mountains, in the calm
 And beauty of the morning, where each sound
 Seems like the accents of an holy psalm
 Swept from the lyre of Nature, and the ground
 Offers its matin incense wide around,—
 Oh God! upon the mountains is there one,
 Whose heart receives not, like yon lake profound,
 The imaged beauty,—sends not back a tone
 With Nature’s solemn voice in gentlest unison?

Thy mighty presence is around us,—felt,
 Not in its terrors, earthquake, storm and fire,
 But sights and sounds of harmony, that melt
 Into the spirit’s depths, ’till each desire
 Rises to Thee, as yonder clouds aspire
 To the huge mountains’ summits, from below
 Issuing in mist and dampness,—but as higher
 They climb the everlasting peaks of snow,
 Touched with the hues of Heaven, and melting in its glow.

And there ye stand, majestic Alps! which never
 By foot of man were trod,—ye stand, and smile
 In calm derision at his weak endeavour
 To touch the confines of each sky-girt isle;
 ’Tis well! albeit his chainless soul the while
 Can make your peaks her stepping-stones to climb
 Heights that look down upon your giant pile.
 Where she shall rest immortally sublime,
 When ye have crumbled down amid the wrecks of Time.

Mountain on mountain, cliff on cliff sublime,
Such as no mortal step hath dared to climb,
Girdled with clouds and canopied with snows
Far into peerless light the Eternal peaks arose !
And up and down, from dizzy height to height,
Ethereal forms of beauty and of might
Sped like embodied lightning ; and, methought,
Mine ear at times unearthly music caught,
Sweet tones that spake of love—the voice of Him
Who stood amidst His host of Seraphim,
Listing the prayers they wafted from below,
The plaint of anguish and the groan of woe.

“ My father’s God ! I learned in happier days
To seek thy blessing, and to sing thy praise ;
In boyhood’s hours, upon my parent’s knee,
I trembling listened while they spake of thee ;
But then I saw thyself, and every sense
Was hushed to deep but fearless reverence ;
I could not fear,—a message from above
Revealed thy name, and told me it was love ;
There were no words, but thoughts of peace divine,
Breathed from thy spirit, and inhaled by mine :
That hour I proved, ’mid sorrow, want and care,
The power of faith, the prevalence of prayer ;
And since that hour, whatever ills assailed,
I often proved it, and it never failed ;

Bear witness, Peniël,³ how the livelong night,
 Locked in the arms of more than mortal might,
 I strove in strong endurance,—wearily,
 Hour after hour, that heavy night toiled by,
 And still he yielded not;—my nerveless limb
 Shrank to his touch;—but yet I clung to him,
 Till strength and breath had failed :—at length he spoke,
 —‘Unhand me, mortal, for the day hath broke,’—
 ‘Nay, Lord,’ I feebly cried, ‘We part not so,
 Except thou bless, I will not let thee go.’—
 Again he spake,—my heart the accents hailed,—
 ‘Rise !—thou hast power with God, and hast prevailed.’

“That morn my brother met me,—with dismay
 I heard the tidings of his fierce array.
 Long years had passed,—enough, methought, of time
 To wipe away the memory of my crime ;
 But I was rich,—my flocks extended wide
 Whitened the banks of Jordan’s rushing tide,

³ “And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” Gen. xxxii. 24–28.

And ill my peaceful shepherds might withstand
The mountain-chieftain and his armed band :
In sooth I feared—⁴and fond precaution cast
To make the dearest front the peril last.
Alas for faith ! How soon, by danger driven,
The wavering soul unclasps her hold on Heaven !
Could I forget, while yet my limbs confessed
The touch that visionary hand impressed ?
But He did not forget,—my brother felt
Each angry purpose 'neath His influence melt.
We met as brethren meet, who long have loved,
And long been parted :—How my heart was moved,
⁵As to my outstretched arms that rugged man,
With all the warmth of boyish welcome, ran ;
As thoughts of old remembrance uncongealed
Those tears, so long—alas ! so sternly sealed :
I blessed him there ;—and there, with shame, renewed
To Bethel's God my vows of gratitude.

“No marvel then, that to my brightening view
Too flattering Hope her fairest pictures drew ;

⁴ “And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.” Gen. xxxiii. 2.

⁵ “And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him : and they wept.” Gen. xxxiii. 4.

No marvel, that I dreamed of peace to come,
And all the quiet and the bliss of home,—
Days of light labour,—nights of peaceful rest,—
All I had sought so long,—so late possessed.
I gazed on those who soothed my toilsome youth
With woman's patience, tenderness, and truth,—
I gazed upon each dear and happy child,—
And every brow returned my glance and smiled:—
Oh God! within my very grasp was placed
The cup of rapture I was ne'er to taste.
A few short months,—and I was once again
The most unhappy of unhappy men.
⁶ My daughter!—let it pass!—whate'er thou art,
A father's blessing on thy broken heart;
But *how* I loved thee!—thou wert passing fair,
With glowing cheeks, dark eyes and glossy hair,
And a sweet smile, where once was wildly blent
All that is beautiful and innocent,
A picture limned in Nature's softest mood,—
But now all blotted o'er with tears and blood.

“Dear children! I have learned at length to know
The gain of grief,—the blessedness of woe;
To feel that heavenly peace, vouchsafed alone
When all the blandishments of Earth are gone.

⁶ Gen. xxxiv.

Yet long I struggled with the chastening rod,
Marvelling and murmuring at the ways of God,
Who seemed to shroud his smiles in wayward gloom,
And blight the hopes himself had bade to bloom;
I know Him now!—and ah! I know the heart,
That thus in mercy he ordained to smart,—
In mercy made each earthly prospect dim,
That it might centre all its love on Him.

“Yet ’twas a bitter lesson—and e’en now
I feel the scars of that o’erwhelming blow,
Which, sudden as the lightning from above,
Blasted my paradise of earthly love.
Oh Rachel! often had we prayed that Heaven
Would grant us children:—and the boon was given,
The fatal boon, with bitterest sorrow rife!
Heaven gave the children, but removed the wife:
Was it for this, all lovely as thou wert,
I won the treasure of thy virgin heart?
For this, a menial mid thy father’s herd,
I bore the sickening pang of hope deferred;
Bore what youth’s eager heart so hardly bears
In patient toil for two long weeks of years?”

⁷ Gen. xxxv. 9—12. God appeared to Jacob and blessed him, immediately before the death of Rachel.

There as I gazed upon thy cold pale face,
E'er yet I yielded thee to Earth's embrace,
How memory called her phantoms, till I seemed
To live again amid the scenes she dreamed ;
With torturing accuracy rose to sight
Each half forgotten moment of delight,—
The smile that blessed me, when I met thee first,
The hope in solitude and silence nursed,
The whispered vow that made my passion known,
The blush that told I did not love alone,
The tones of fondness, as we wandered wide
In lingering converse by the meadow's side,
The bridal day—the conjugal caress,
The o'erflowing cup of mutual happiness,
The dear domestic charms that soothed and cheered,
Doubled each joy, and every sorrow shared !
Again I gazed !—I could not choose but hope
That those sealed eyelids to my glance would ope ;
I kissed her cheek,—that touch the vision sped :
And then I felt that joy and she were dead !

“ I sought my father's home ;—where she was not,
It seemed a sad and solitary spot :
Howbeit, though all its early glow was lost,
Though torn from all it loved and valued most,
The heart, by instinct, like the widowed vine,
Sought some fresh object where its strings might twine :

And many offered—but I scarce could bear
Another's image in my breast to wear,
Until at length to my despairing eyes
I saw her likeness in her son arise,—
Her first-born son;—the eye whose light was bliss,
The high clear brow,—the shadowy hair was his,
The smile, like sunshine upon roses thrown,
The deep and touching tenderness of tone,—
I saw—I heard her!—from their icy chain
My chilled affections thawed to life again;—
Thawed like the mountain stream, and swept away
The bounds of duty in its headlong sway.
Yes Joseph! madly I on thee bestowed
All that to man—half that to God I owed:
I felt no warmth,—no energy in prayer,
Unless thy name was fondly blended there;
I looked on forms that once my love had shared,
But owned no pleasure till thyself appeared.

“ This could not last!—and Heaven and Earth, alike
Wronged and insulted, raised the arm to strike.
It boots not now, when all its issue know,
Again to harrow up that tale of woe:—
^s The bloody vest—The words, so cutting cold
From those who shared not in the griefs they told:

^s “ They sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.”
Gen. xxxvii. 32.

My sons!—His brothers!—I would not recall
Those deeds, where sin and shame belong to all,
Save once again to breathe my thanks to Heaven,—
All sinned,—all suffered,—all have been forgiven.
Thenceforth the sleepless night and sunless day
Wore in monotony of grief away;
My broken spirit, humbled in the dust,
Mourned o'er its chastisement, but owned it just:
Earth too withheld her fruits,—my fields grew bare,
Till one vast desert frowned through all the year;
I little heeded,—for the spirit's dearth
Had left no relish for the gifts of Earth.
⁹One only wish upon my bosom pressed,
To creep into my grave, and be at rest.
But when I saw my sons, and marked at length
The silent droop of manhood's sinewy strength;
And childish cheeks, and eyes, so bright ere while,
Part with their roses, and forget their smile,
I felt for them, and sent them forth to buy
From Egypt's granaries a brief supply.

“Oh God of mercy! while I deemed thy wrath
Had swept the fairest blossoms from my path,
The Angel of thy presence still was near,
Treasured each sigh, and numbered every tear;

⁹ “He refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.” Gen. xxxvii. 35.

And he, my long lost son!—thy wing had spread
Its mighty shelter o'er his youthful head;
Guided by Thee, he sought the massy pile,
Where Memphis frowns upon the subject Nile;
Through various scenes thy favour cheered him on,
The bondman's fetter—and the tyrant's throne,
And gave him Pharaoh's delegated powers,
To save a people's life, his own, and ours.

¹⁰ I scarcely heard the tidings!—the slow sway
Of grief and time had sapped my strength away;
But that fierce pang of mingled joy and wonder
Full nigh had rent the slender thread asunder:
And when I woke to sense, the chill of fear
Checked hope's bright current in its wild career;
Dark, baffling doubts did long and sternly strive
With those strange words—'Thy son is yet alive!'
Yet did I live to see him!—live to hear
Those tones of music melt upon mine ear.
The purple robe—the sceptre's jewelled weight—
The guard of honour, and the car of state,—
I marked them not;—my heart, my eye alone
One thought, one object filled,—my son—my son!
¹¹ Yea I have seen his children!—here I rest
Nursed by their care, and by their fondness blest;

¹⁰ "They told him, saying; Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." Gen. xlv. 26.

¹¹ "And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and lo, God hath shewed me thy seed." Gen. xlviii. 11.

They made the evening of my troubled day,
In cloudless sunshine, smile itself away.

“— Aye, the broad sun is setting!—’tis the last
That on these eyes its parting light shall cast;
He will arise to give the morrow birth,
And waken all the myriad charms of earth;—
I shall not need him then!—my soul shall gaze
On lovelier prospects and on purer rays!
E’en now, through yonder clouds, the sapphire sky
Opes, like the portal of eternity;
And forms of light and air around me throng,
And far, faint cadences of angel-song
Float through the depth of heaven!—I come—I come—
Farewell, my children!—’tis my summons home—
My Father’s home!—Alas! your cheeks are pale,
And ye have sorrowed o’er the old man’s tale;
It ends in peace! and, with my dying breath,
That peace, my latest blessing, I bequeath
To ye and your’s for ever:—guard it well!—
¹²And He of Bethel and of Peniël—
He who, through all the varied path I trod,
Was Jacob’s Comforter and Jacob’s God—
He shall be yours:—and, oh, ye ne’er shall know
The dark experience of my sin and woe;

¹² “The Angel, that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.”

Gen. xlviii. 16.

Unchanging love o'er all your life shall shine,
And crown its blessings with an end like mine!"

The scene of death is closed,—and Mamre's cave
Receives the Patriarch to his father's grave;
And o'er the bier, where those dear ashes slept,
A sorrowing nation bowed its head and wept:
They built no pyramid, with mimic woe
To mock the dust it sepulchres below,—
To stand, when all beside have fled the spot,
Eternal monument of names forgot;
Yet Jacob's humble name shall live and shine,
Scrolled mid the records of a hand divine;
No tale of wonder, Fancy's ear to soothe,
But solemn lessons of unvarnished truth,
Where men of every age and every clime,
Till the Great Angel knells the death of Time,
May learn, amid the fever-dream of life,
Joy's transient flash, and trouble's stormy strife,
To bid the fickle hopes of Earth depart,
And yield to God an undivided heart,
And prove his power, whatever lot befall,
To guide, to comfort, and to save through all.



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